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LAURA BRIDGMAN.

[WE continue, as in former years, the history of LAURA BRIDGMAN. Independently of the intrinsic interest which the story possesses for every philosophic and benevolent mind, there are special and peculiar reasons why it should be studied and pondered upon by every teacher. Having stated many of these reasons, at some length, in former numbers of the Journal, we present a history of her case for the last year without further comment.

Subjoined, we shall also publish Dr. Howe's Report on Oliver Caswell.—ED.]

TO THE TRUSTEES.

Gentlemen :

I have the honor to lay before you the following Report upon the history and instruction of Laura Bridgman.

In preparing it, I have introduced some speculations which may appear trite or uninteresting to those conversant with metaphysics; I have also indulged in some reflections upon such points as seemed to have any bearing upon common instruction, and these may seem trivial and unnecessary to practical teachers. But in apology, let me say, that there is a vast number of persons who take a deep interest in the case, who are neither metaphysicians nor teachers, and they will perhaps prefer even my crude speculations and reflections to a bald narration of facts.

To such let me say, in the first place, that nothing can show in a more clear and forcible manner, than Laura's case, the difficulties to be overcome when we learn our vernacular tongue, and the inferiority of artificial to natural methods in the acquisition of language.

The difficulties in the way of the deaf mute are very great,—so great indeed that we may safely say they are never entirely overcome; because, although ingenious men by centuries of labor have built up a beautiful system by which the mutes are enabled to read, to write, and to converse with ease and with pleasure, still they must, in spite of education, remain insensible to many of the charms of conversation, and the beauties of style, both of prose and of verse. But this beautiful system is addressed entirely to the eye, and poor Laura has no sight.

She has a good intellect; she has been seven years under instruction; her teachers have not been wanting in zeal and diligence, and she has been herself untiring in her efforts, and yet she is now on the verge of womanhood, without so much acquaintance with language as a common child of six years old. This often excites the surprise of visitors who have known the history of her case for a long time, and have taken great interest in it.

In truth, people seldom stop to reflect upon the nature of arbitrary language, upon its essential importance to the development of the intellect, or upon the wonderful process by which we gradually advance from the power of naming single objects, to that of condensing many of them into one complex term;—from the Alpha of language, mamma!—up to its Omega, Universe!

How much is asserted in the simplest sentence,—as this, for instance;—“we might have been more truly happy had our widowed father remained contentedly with us.” Here is the assertion of a plurality of persons; of their condition in past time; of the fact of their having been moderately happy in the society of their father; there is the negation of their entire happiness; the implied doubt whether after all they would have been happier; their relation as children; their regret at their father’s departure; of the father himself it is affirmed that he had been with his children; it is implied that he had been married; that he had lost his wife, not by separation, but by death; that he was not contented to remain with his children; that he had gone away from them; that he might have remained with them, &c. &c.

When we reflect upon that principle of the mind which requires that all possible objects, qualities and conditions must be linked so closely with signs that the perception of the signs shall recall them necessarily and instantly; and when we consider how much is attained by young persons, who a few years ago could hardly master baby’s prattle, but who now have all the vast sweep of thought, the great amount of knowledge, the degree of reflection, of separation, and of generalization necessary to comprehend such a phrase as

“Count all the advantage prosperous vice attains,
—Tis but what virtue flies from, and despairs;”

we may say with the ancient,—“there is but one object greater than the human soul, and that one is its Creator.”

The space between the starting point of the infant and that obtained by the mature man, is immense; but our minds, aided by language which give to them wings, skim swiftly and delightedly over the whole, as the wild fowl flies from zone to zone; while Laura is like one of those birds shorn of its wings and doomed to attempt the vast distance on its weary feet. If persons will only make these reflections, they will be inclined rather to wonder that she has gone so far, than to feel surprised at her not having gone farther.

With these preliminary remarks, I proceed to a notice of her progress during the year 1844.

I was in Europe during the first half of the year; and the most serious cause of regret which I have for my absence, is the interruption which it caused in my supervision of her education. It may be that I should not have been able to prevent all unfavorable impressions upon her mind, even had I been always here; they were perhaps inevitable at her age, and with her increased capacity for conversation with others; but at any rate I should have tried.

Her teacher, Miss Mary Swift, has been faithful and industrious; and in the intellectual instruction she has shown great tact and ability. Had all others been as discreet and wise as she, we should not have to regret some impressions which the child has received, and which I shall presently mention.

Her bodily health has been very good during the whole year. She has increased in stature; and her figure, which is more fully unfolded, is well proportioned in all its parts, and strong and graceful. She continues to improve in the knowledge and use of language, as will be shown by the following letters, which were written solely by her; and by the extracts from her teacher's journal, in which were recorded at the moment, and with great exactitude, the very words she used.

24th March, 1844.

My dear Mrs. Howe:

I want to see you very much; I hope you are very well. Miss J. is very well and happy, I think of you very very often. I was very much pleased to receive a letter from you, and I liked it very much. When you come home, I shall shake your hands and hug and kiss you very hard because I love you and am your dear friend. Miss J. is making a nice worsted chair for you to please you very much for a new house. I send much love to you and a kiss. Are you very glad to receive letters from me? One night I dreamed that I was very glad to see you again and that I slept with you all night. I hope that you do not forget to talk with your fingers. I am sad that people are very idle and dirty and poor. I write many letters to you because I love you very much. My mother wrote a letter to Miss J. that she was very sick, and my little sister was quite sick, but they are getting well. I am very well. I am your dear friend. I try very hard about America and Europe and Asia, and many other things. I can say ship, paper, Dr., baby, tea, mother and father with my mouth. My teacher always reads a story to me: she is kind to me: she sets me a good example.

My dear friend good bye.

LAURA BRIDGMAN.

In another letter written soon after, she said:

"I am happy that your baby is so happy to see the bright light. I want you to come here now; if you do not come quick, then I must send a long string to pull you over the sea to South Boston. I thought of you and Julia, and Dr. many times; that they would love me very much, because I love them and you so much."

The following are extracts from the teacher's journal:

April 3d, 1844.—At nine, when Laura came down, she said, "my heart beats very quick, it is sick." I asked what made it so. "Long ago, when Drew was my teacher, my heart beat quick and ached, because I felt very sad that Adeline died, and I did not know about going to Heaven." I asked her if that made her heart ache now? She said, "Monday I thought much about my dear best Friend, and why I should die, and it made my heart beat quick,

and I thought if I should know when he took my breath, and I tried to draw breath and could not. Do you ever lose breath?" To change the conversation I said yes, when I run up stairs quickly. "I have lost part of the heart," said she; "it is not so large as it was when I was small." I asked when she lost it? "I think it went to my lungs. My blood ran quickly and made my heart beat quickly."

April 8th.—At nine commenced the lesson by telling Laura about the Rail-Road from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and that they were going to have a man from the United States to build it, and about the expense, distance, &c. She asked how the people could get \$4,000,000 to pay for it. This introduced the Emperor Nicholas, his rank, office, &c., and from that she asked what the man was called who took care of Americans; told her about the President of the United States, his name and residence. I asked her if she remembered Harrison. At the time of his death, she saw several ladies with crepe on their arms, and she made one for herself. When I recalled this to her mind, she asked why the people wore it. This introduced the subject of wearing black in mourning, which she has never known anything about before. While talking of Harrison I told her the people were sad because they could not have him to take care of them. She said, "were they sad that he went to heaven and was very happy there?" Promised her a continuance of the lesson to-morrow.

One of her exercises consists in having a simple story read to her, of which she is to give a version the next day in her own language. Her first original composition, however, gives a better idea of her use of language than her letters, in writing which she has adopted too formal a style. The whole story is of her own invention.

"There was a little girl named Jane Damon who lived in the country with Mrs. Damon. She was a very good and amiable, and was never cross any. Jane always obeyed her mother. One day she went with her mother to see her friends and they went to see beautiful flowers in the garden. When Mrs. Damon told Jane, you must go to school, she got ready as fast as she could. She had the books and writing in her own desk. Her teacher was very kind to her scholars. Her name was Miss Charlotte. Mrs. Damon gave Jane a beautiful present. Her sister asked what it was, and her mother said it was a ring called diamond stone in it. After a few days her mother took Jane to see her Grandmother and staid for one week. She had a very pleasant visit. Mrs. Damon had a little girl named Clara Damon, and Jane took good care of Clara while her mother was away a little while. It did not cry any for some milk, but Jane fed Clara with a spoon she loved her so much," &c.

Her teacher says,

Aug. 26th.—At eight she was talking about a variety of subjects, and among the number, of sickness,—she said, "I was sick last year and my mind was dizzy and I was much frightened in my heart." Then she wanted to know the meaning of insensible, and of crucified. I thought I could give her a general definition that would satisfy her as well as anything else, and I told her it was to make a cross. She said, "Jane Damon crucifies the wires for her basket, and winds the worsted on them."* I had to tell her she did not understand it, and had better not use it. The next word was mingle,—defined it by mix,—but she did not understand that any better. Gave her an example of the use of the two words, and she said, "the drunkard mixes sugar and rum to drink." Then she wished me to understand that she had not forgotten anything and gave me a recapitulation,—perish is to die, you told me last winter,—machine, my writing board is a machine to write with; require, is when I tell you, you must mend my stockings. I require you to do them. I require you to read my story to Jane Damon." She is still on the Globe, in Geogra-

* This shows the effect of giving an erroneous idea to a child, and illustrates the manner in which error propagates itself.—ED.

phy, and studying the Zones. To-day, the lesson was to tell in what zone the different countries in South America were; which, with a great deal of difficulty, she accomplished.

Mention was made in a former Report of her disposition to use the lungs and vocal organs. She still shows this; and so does Oliver Caswell, though to a much smaller extent than Laura. The manner in which she uses these organs seems to show their natural office, and would settle the question, (if it be any longer a question,) whether they were destined by nature to be the medium of intellectual communication among men; or whether they were selected from among other equally possible means for interchange of thought,—as pantomime, arbitrary, visible signs, &c.

When Laura feels any strong emotion, her chest is inflated, the air is retained a moment, and then expelled with quickness and force, and is often interrupted in its passage by the glottis, tongue, or lips, thus producing a variety of interjections. The fact of these broken sounds will be interesting to the philologist, because they form the connecting link between natural language and speech;—two things sometimes confounded, but which differ widely from each other. Natural language is the servant of the heart; speech is the handmaid of the intellect.

Deaf mutes generally, when they are moved by feeling, gesticulate violently, and also make broken sounds with the vocal organs, thus bringing in the adjuncts of speech, as we add gestures to our language when we are excited.

Pains have been taken with Laura to suppress her disposition to make these disagreeable interjections, for although they may be considered as parts of natural language, it is language natural only in the rudest state of society,—in the lowest development of intellect, and she is to live in a society where they would be disagreeable. The correction, however, is not easy to be made; she may have been sometimes checked too abruptly, and in a way to let her perceive that it was done rather for the gratification of others, than for her own good; and children always resist the unconditional surrender of their own will to that of another, unless the summons be made in the irresistible language of love,—which is the *open sesame* to every child's heart.

Her teacher was one day talking with her on the subject, and showing her the propriety of repressing these noises, when she said, "she did not always try not to make them." Miss Swift urged her reasons for wishing her to do so, when Laura said, "*but I have very much voice!*" This was the truth of the matter; the nervous energy, which rapidly accumulated within her while sitting still, found in this way a partial means of escape; and it was as hard for her to restrain it, as it is for little boys who have "very much motion in them," to sit still in school when unoccupied; the fluid accumulates within them until it makes them uneasy, and they relieve themselves from the pressure by suddenly pushing or kicking their neighbors, or by some motion of the body which acts like the opening of a safety-valve, and leaves them quiet for a while.

She was not inclined to give up the argument entirely, and said in her defence, "God gave me much voice." She yielded, however, and saw the reasonableness of the request, especially as she had particular hours when she could make as much noise as she wished to do. At such times she often goes into a closet, and shutting the door, indulges herself in a surfeit of sounds.

Great interest has been manifested on all sides to know the effect of religious instruction upon her mind, and not without good cause. I have always thought it desirable, on many accounts, to give her such ideas, and such only, on this and other important topics, as she shall be able always to retain. It is painful to be forced to relinquish ideas which by long possession have come to be regarded as much one's own,—as much a part of one's self,—as one's property, or one's limbs. We defend our religious, political, and other opinions with a zeal not proportionate to their truth, but to the length of time and the closeness of intimacy with which we have associated them with ourselves. When we have never contemplated the possibility of their falsity, the refusal of others to admit them as true, and still more, the attempt to destroy them, often excites as much passion as would the protest of a draft, or an assault upon the person. Some men may preserve their elasticity of mind, and retain unimpaired their confidence in their last belief, after the abandonment of several creeds, especially if blessed with self-complacency; but all cannot do so; for if the soul have drifted from several anchors in the storm of infidelity, it will hardly rely even upon the *best bower* of faith, as perfectly sure and steadfast.

It seems especially desirable that Laura should never be obliged to remodel her faith. There is a moral in the story of the boy, who, when the microscope first revealed to him the minute and wondrous structure of one of his hairs, was surprised and pained at not finding the *number* upon it. He had believed literally that the hairs of his head were all "numbered;" and being of a shy nature, he would not ask any explanation, but allowed his faith in the Bible to be seriously impaired. Laura can never use a microscope, but she will, by-and-by, bring the magnifying power of mature judgment to bear upon all that she now takes unhesitatingly from others as literal truth; and I would that she might always find the *number* written upon everything on which she had been led to look for it.

But I have given, in former Reports, some of my reasons for deferring this most important part of her education, and I need not now repeat them; suffice it to say, that I wished to give her only such instruction about religion and God, as she was prepared to receive and understand, so that her moral and religious nature should be developed *pari passu* with her intellect. It was delightful for me to find that, without any particular direction being given to it from without, her mind naturally tended towards the causes of things, and that, after an acquaintance with the extent of human creative power, she perceived the necessity of superhuman power for the explanation of a thousand

daily recurring phenomena. She could not indeed, like the poor Indian, "see God in clouds and hear Him in the wind," but then He was manifest in the springing grass, the bursting flower, and the ripening fruit. The genial sun, the falling rain, the driving snow,—these, and countless other things which became known to her by her single sense, made her aware of a power transcending the power of man. It would have been more delightful still to lead her wondering mind to the perception of the higher attributes of God, as her capacity for such perception was unfolded, until, her moral nature being fully developed, she might have been as much impressed with love for his tender mercies as she had been with wonder at his Almighty Power.

I am aware that many will say it is impossible that Laura, ignorant as she is, should have by herself conceived the existence of God, because it is said that of the thousands of deaf mutes who have been received into the Institutions of this country, no one ever arrived at that truth unaided.

Now there is very great vagueness in such general negations. The words can be taken in various senses, and are difficult to be proved in any. It may be said that no man ever arrived at the knowledge of the fact that ten and ten make twenty, by the unassisted efforts of his own mind; for if he had never associated with other human beings, he would probably never have perceived that relation between numbers.

The words "knowledge of God" may also be understood in different ways. If a child ascertains that tables and chairs and carpets; houses, ships, and machinery; carriages, tools, watches, and a thousand other things, are made by men, and then infers that the sun, moon, and stars, the hills, rivers, and rocks, must have been created, but could not have been made by man,—that child has an idea of the existence of God; and when you teach him the three letters, G-O-D, you do not make to him a revelation of God's existence, you only give to him a name for a power the existence of which he had already conceived in his own mind. We teachers are apt to overrate our own efforts; let us attempt to convey a knowledge of abstract truths to parrots and monkeys, and then we shall know how much is done by children, and how little by ourselves.

It is in this sense that I mean to be understood when I say that Laura Bridgman of herself arrived at the conception of the existence of God.

Unless there has been some such intellectual process in a child's mind, the words, God, Deity, &c., must be utterly insignificant to it. We pronounce certain words with great solemnity and reverence, and the child perceives and understands our manner, for that is the natural language of our feelings; he imitates us, and the repetition of the words will ever after, by association of ideas, call up in his mind the same vague feelings of solemnity and reverence; but all this may be unaccompanied by anything like an intellectual perception of God's existence and creative power.

It will be said that children three years old will repeat

devoutly the Lord's prayer, and tell correctly what God did on each of the six days of creation; but in so doing, they too often take the name of the Lord in vain, and sometimes, alas! worse than in vain.

Children wish to attach some ideas to every sign which is given to them; we give them words as signs of things, before the capacity of understanding the things is developed in their minds; they attach to the sign some idea, no matter how inappropriate or grotesque, and there it remains trammelling the thoughts, and preventing them from afterwards using the words in a right sense. How vague is the idea which many people attach to some words! and of how much mischief to the world has this vagueness been the source! How long does it take us to sever these ties! how many of us go to our graves without ever breaking a fibre of them,—without ever having divested words of the crude ideas attached to them in childhood, or contemplated the things with the clear eye of reason! We look with contempt upon a man who is instantly and irresistibly moved to solemnity of feeling, and to acts of devotion by the bare sight of two pieces of wood nailed together cross-wise, or by the elevation of the host; but, how many sounding words, which are insignificant in themselves, are dinned into our ears to excite our feelings, or overpower our reason, in the same way that the sublime image is held up before the eyes of our wondering brother.

It may be said that no human being can have any adequate idea of God's attributes, and that therefore all we have to do is to give Laura such ideas of Him as pious Christians form from the study of natural and revealed religion; but, I know not what others may do, I cannot do this. Every man sees God according to his own capacities, and his own nature; the power of poor Laura's God must be weakness compared to the strength of Newton's, who saw Him guiding the huge planets along in their eternal course; the love of her God must be selfishness compared to the love of the God of Howard the philanthropist, who embraced in the arms of his affection the whole human family; but, so must the power and the love of the God of Newton and of Howard, be weakness and selfishness compared to those attributes as seen by the cherubim and seraphim, each of whom see Him with a vision transcending that of the other, all of whom see him with power transcending human, but none of whom can see Him as He is.

I might long ago have taught the Scriptures to Laura; she might have learned, as other children do, to repeat line upon line, and precept upon precept; she might have been taught to imitate others in prayer, but her God must have been her own God, and formed out of the materials with which her mind had been stored. It was my wish to give her gradually such ideas of His power and love as would have enabled her to form the highest possible conception of His divine attributes. In doing this, it was necessary to guard as much as I could against conveying impressions which it would be hard to remove afterwards, and to prevent her forming such notions as would seem

unworthy to her more developed reason, lest the renouncement of them might impair her confidence in her own belief.

But various causes have combined to prevent what seemed to me the natural and harmonious development of her religious nature; and now, like other children, she must take the consequences of the wise or unwise instruction given by others. I did not long hold the only key to her mind; it would have been unkind and unjust to prevent her using her power of language, as fast as she acquired it, in conversation with others, merely to carry out a theory of my own, and she was left to free communication with many persons even before my necessary separation from her of more than a year.

During my absence, and perhaps before, some persons more zealous than discreet, and more desirous to make a proselyte than to keep conscientiously their implied promise of not touching upon religious topics,—some such persons talked to her of the Atonement, of the Redeemer, the Lamb of God, and of some very mystical points of mere speculative doctrine. These things were perhaps not farther beyond her comprehension than they were beyond the comprehension of those persons who assumed to talk to her about them; but they perplexed and troubled her, because, unlike such persons, she wished that every word should be the symbol of some clear and definite idea.

She could not understand metaphorical language; hence the Lamb of God was to her a *bona fide* animal, and she could not conceive why it should continue so long a lamb, and not grow old like others and be called a sheep.

I must be supposed to mention this only as her faithful chronicler, and to do it also in sorrow. If the poor child spoke inadvertently on such topics, it was without consciousness of it, and she was made to do so by indiscreet persons, not by any communications of mine or of her teacher. We shall never speak to her of Jesus Christ but in such a way as to impart a portion at least of our reverence, gratitude, and love.

During my absence in Europe, I received from her several letters, and among others, the following:—

24th of March, 1844.

My Dear Dr. Howe :

I want to see you very much, I hope that you will come to South Boston in May, I have got a bad cough, for I got cold when I came home, in much snow with Miss Swift, but my cough is little better. When you come home I shall be very happy to have you teach me in the Psalms Book, about God and many new things I read in the Harvey Boy's Book every Sunday. I am learning Asia now, I will tell you all about new things to please you very much. Why do you not write a letter to me often? Do you always pray to God to bless me. I think of you often. I send a great deal of love to you and Mrs. Howe. I shall be very happy to see you and her when you come home. I always miss you much. All the girls and I and Lurena had a very pleasant sleighing seven miles to a hotel. We had nice drink of lemon and sugar and mince pie and sponge cake. Governor Briggs came twice to see us and the blind scholars. We are all well and happy and strong. I have not seen you for ten months, that is very long. I wrote a letter to Governor and he wrote a letter to me long ago. Mr. Clifford is a Dr. now to cure his wife. I wrote a letter to her. I want you to write a letter to me. Miss Swift sends her

love to you. Are you in a hurry to see me and J. again? I would like to live with you and your wife in a new house, because I love you the best. All folks are very well and happy. I want you to answer my last letter to you about God and Heaven, and souls and many questions.

My dear friend, good bye.

LAURA BRIDGMAN.

In reply I wrote to her as follows:—

My Dear Little Laura:

Mrs. Howe has a sweet little baby;—it is a little girl; we shall call her Julia; she is very smooth, and soft, and nice; she does not cry much, and we love her very, very much. You love her too, I think, do you not? But you never felt of her, and she never kissed you, and how can you love her? It is not your hands, nor your body, nor your head, which loves her, and loves me, but your soul. If your hand were to be cut off, you would love me the same; so it is not the body which loves. Nobody knows what the soul is, but we know it is not the body, and cannot be hurt like the body; and when the body dies the soul cannot die. You ask me in your letter a great many things about the soul, and about God; but, my dear little girl, it would take very much time, and very many sheets of paper to tell you all I think about it, and I am very busy with taking care of my dear wife; but I shall try to tell you a little, and you must wait until I come home, in June, and we will talk very much about all these things. You have been angry a few times, and you have known others to be angry, and you know what I mean by anger; you love me and many friends, and you know what I mean by love. When I say there is a spirit of love in the world, I mean that good people love each other; but you cannot feel the spirit of love with your fingers; it has no shape, nor body; it is not in one place more than in another, yet wherever there are good people, there is a spirit of love. God is a spirit; the spirit of love. If you go into a house, and the children tell you that their father whips them, and will not feed them; if the house is cold, and dirty, and everybody is sad and frightened, because the father is bad, and angry, and cruel, you will know that the father has no spirit of love. You never felt of him, you never had him strike you, you do not know what man he is, and yet you know he has not the spirit of love,—that is, he is not a good, kind father. If you go into another house, and the children are all warm, and well fed, and well taught, and are very happy, and everybody tells you that the father did all this, and made them happy,—then you know he has the spirit of love; you never saw him, and yet you know certainly that he is good, and you may say that the spirit of love reigns in that house. Now, my dear child, I go all about in this great world, and I see it filled with beautiful things, and there are a great many millions of people, and there is food for them, and fire for them, and clothes for them, and they can be happy if they have a mind to be, and if they will love each other. All this world, and all these people, and all the animals, and all things, were made by God. He is not a man, nor like a man; I cannot see Him, nor feel Him, any more than you saw and felt the good father of that family; but I know that He has the spirit of love, because He too provided everything to make all the people happy. God wants everybody to be happy all the time, every day, Sundays and all, and to love one another; and if they love one another they will be happy; and when their bodies die, their souls will live on, and be happy, and then they will know more about God.

The good father of the family I spoke to you about, let his children do as they wished to do, because he loved to have them free; but he let them know that he wished them to love each other, and to do good; and if they obeyed his will they were happy; but if they did not love each other, or if they did any wrong, they were unhappy; and if one child did wrong it made the others unhappy too. So in the great world. God left men, and women, and children, to do as they wish, and let them know if they love one another, and do good, they will be happy; but if they do wrong, they will be unhappy, and make others unhappy likewise.

I will try to tell you why people have pain sometimes, and are sick, and die; but I cannot take so much time and paper now. But you must be

sure that God loves you, and loves everybody, and wants you and everybody to be happy ; and if you love everybody, and do them all the good you can, and try to make them happy, you will be very happy yourself, and will be much happier after your body dies than you are now.

Dear little Laura, I love you very much. I want you to be happy and good. I want you to know many things, but you must be patient and learn easy things first, and hard ones afterwards. When you were a little baby, you could not walk, and you learned first to creep on your hands and knees, and then to walk a little, and by-and-by you grew strong, and walked much. It would be wrong for a little child to want to walk very far before it was strong. Your mind is young and weak, and cannot understand hard things, but by-and-by it will be stronger, and you will be able to understand hard things ; and I and my wife will help Miss Swift to show you all about things that now you do not know. Be patient, then, dear Laura ; be obedient to your teacher, and to those older than you ; love everybody, and do not be afraid.

Good bye ! I shall come soon, and we will talk and be happy.

Your true friend,

DOCTOR.

Before receiving this, she wrote me again, as follows :—

My very Dear Dr. Howe :

What can I first say to God when I am wrong ? Would He send me good thoughts and forgive me when I am very sad for doing wrong ? Why does he not love wrong people if they love him ? Would he be very happy to have me think of Him and Heaven very often ? Do you remember that you said I must think of God and Heaven ? I want you to please to answer me to please me. I have learned about great many things to please you very much. Mrs. Harrington has got a new little baby eight days last Saturday. God was very generous and kind to give babies to many people. Miss Rogers' mother has got baby two months ago. I want to see you very much. I send much love to you. Is God ever ashamed ? I think of God very often to love Him. Why did you say that I must think of God ? You must answer me all about it, if you do not, I shall be sad. Shall we know what to ask God to do ? When will he let us go to see Him in Heaven ? How did God tell people that he lived in Heaven ? How could he take care of folks in Heaven and why is he our Father ? When can he let us go in Heaven ? Why can not He let wrong people to go to live with Him and be happy ? Why should he not like to have us ask him to send us good thoughts if we are not very sad for doing wrong ?

I give the following extract from my own journal, as a specimen of the method of conversing with her on such subjects :—

In talking with Laura to-day, on the subject of the Deity, I said, How do men make bread ? "From wheat." How do they make wheat ? "They cannot make wheat," said she. Then how do they get it ? said I. "God makes it grow." Why ? "For man to eat," said she. I then explained to her that some birds and animals eat grain, and asked,—Why does God give it them ? She said, "To make them happy." But does He love them ? said I. "No," said she; "they have no souls."

I then told her there are some beautiful islands on the globe, where the sun shines clearly and warmly; where there are rich meadows, and sweet flowers, and tall trees, and shady groves; where the brooks run merrily down the hills, and where there is plenty of delicious fruit and nutritive plants; that these islands are never visited by man, yet nevertheless, that thousands of birds are singing in the branches, and re-

joicing over their little ones; that the young animals are frolicking on the soft grass, and the old ones looking on them with silent joy; that the fishes are swimming briskly about in the clear streams, and leaping out sportfully into the air, and that all this has been going on thousands of years. After thus trying to give her as vivid a picture as I could of the happy inhabitants of these peaceful isles, I asked her who made such beautiful places? She said, "God." But for what did He make them? "To make the animals all happy," said she, and added, of her own accord, "God is very good to make them happy." She then meditated a little, and said, "Can they thank Him?" Not in words, said I. I then went on to show her that He had no need of thanks in words; that He did not do these good things in order to be thanked, when she stopped me by asking, "why He did not give them souls?" I tried to explain how much of reason and sense they really possess, and how grateful all of God's children should be for what they have, without asking why it was not more, when she said suddenly, "Why is God never unkind or wrong?" I tried as well as I could to explain the perfection of God's character, and its freedom from human frailties; but, alas! how vain is the effort, when neither teacher nor pupil have any other standard than human littleness by which to measure God's greatness.

There is this constant difficulty with her, (and is it not one too much overlooked in the religious instruction of other children?) that being unable to form any idea of virtue and goodness in the abstract, she must seek it in the concrete; and her teachers and friends, frail and imperfect beings like herself, furnish the poor impersonations of the peerless attributes of God.

This difficulty might have been avoided, I think, by the plan which I had marked out for the orderly development of her intellectual faculties and moral sentiments, and which was simply to follow the natural order; but since that plan has been marred by the well-meant officiousness of others, there remains only to remedy, as far as we can, what we cannot cure entirely,—the bad effects of ill-timed direction of her thoughts to subjects too far above her comprehension.

After the conversation related above, I went on to illustrate, as well as I could, the differences between human and divine care of animals. I said, why does man take care of a cow, and get hay into his barn to feed her in winter? "Oh!" said she, "to get her milk!" Why does he take care of his horse, and keep him covered with a warm blanket, and feed him? "That is to ride him well," said she. Why do people keep cats, and feed them? "To catch mice!" Why do farmers take such good care of sheep? "To get wool." But when the cow and the sheep are old, and cannot work, what does man do? "He kills to get meat." Well, said I, why does God make the grass to grow in the meadow, and let the cow eat it,—does He want her milk? "No, no!" said she. Does He need the wool of the sheep? "No, no!" replied

she, vehemently,—“ He does not want anything !” Presently she said, “ How do men know whether cows are willing to give them their milk ?” I said, They do not know, and do not care. She mused awhile, as is her wont when talking on a new subject, and said,—“ The little lambs and young animals play, why do not sheep love to have their pleasure ?” I explained how they had pleasure in giving milk to their young; how they loved to eat the tender grass, and lie in the shade. She seemed to have another difficulty, and said,—“ Why do cats want to kill mice? they have no love !”

To answer this question, it would have been necessary to open up the whole of that wonderful and benevolent scheme by which God, through the agency of death, bestows the blessings of existence upon myriads of generations, instead of upon a single one; and this scheme, like many others, can only be fully explained to her when her reasoning powers are fully developed.

There are a great many things with the existence of which most young persons become familiar, but of which, Laura, as yet, knows nothing; such as wars, and fightings, crimes of various kinds, severe accidents, and awful deaths.

Not long ago, allusion was made, incidentally in conversation with her, to murder and capital punishment, when she instantly asked, with much eagerness, and with an expression of horror, why a man would kill another? The explanation was painful, and probably unsatisfactory; but not more so than that which followed, of capital punishment. She was perplexed to know why men should kill the murderer; and her simple question amounted to asking why they try to remedy one evil deed by perpetrating a like deed; it was as forcible as if put by Beccaria himself; nor could I answer it, except by assuming the homœopathic axiom, that “ like cures like.”

It may be remembered that in the Report of the year before last, mention was made of an instance where she was led by strong temptation, to tell an untruth; and of the deep regret and repentance which she manifested when she found how much wrong she had done to herself, and how much grief she had caused her friends. It seems that the lesson has not been forgotten, for I find the following record in the teacher’s journal :—

“ At nine, talked with Laura an hour. She asked, ‘ Do you remember about the woollen gloves that I had two years ago? and that I hid them and told lie about them, because I did not like them ?’ She talked of nothing but this the whole hour; said she was sorry she did so, and that the reason was, because she preferred to wear kid gloves. She spoke of her work yesterday, and I told her she was very industrious to knit so much. She appeared very happy, and told me she would try to be very gentle all day, and not tire me, because I was very weak and sick.”

We have not been so fortunate, however, as to avoid all explosions of passion, but I am constrained to say, I think that is less her fault than ours. The following record in her teacher’s journal, I read with grief equalled only by surprise :—

February 2nd, 1844. At twelve, I was talking with her in the school-

room, about the different kinds of coal, and the manner of making charcoal ;—we had just commenced the latter subject, when I noticed that she had left her handkerchief upon the desk. I have always objected to this, and told her to keep it in her desk. She has never refused to do it, though I have noticed frequently that she did it with great reluctance, but have never spoken to her on the subject afterwards. To-day, when I told her to put it in the desk, she hesitated as usual, and put it in her lap, saying, "I prefer to put it in my lap," and then held up her hand for me to go on with the story. I said, "I told you to put it in the desk, and now I want you to do it." She sat still for about two minutes, and then lifted the lid very high, threw the handkerchief into the desk, and let it fall with such a noise as to startle all in the schoolroom. Her face was growing pale, and she was evidently getting into a passion. [This was the moment to cease urging her, and to leave her to herself for awhile.] Whenever I have seen anything of this kind, the question,—Are you angry?—has always recalled her to her senses ; but now she answered, "I am very cross." I said to her, "I am very sorry,—and I am sorry you shut the desk lid so hard ; I want you to open it again, and take your handkerchief to put it in gently." Putting on a very firm look, she said, "I will take it out to wipe my eyes,"—meaning, but not to mind you. I told her, I wanted her first to put it in gently. After a moment's hesitation, she took it out and let the cover slam as before, and then raised it to wipe her eyes. [Here she should have been taken to her room, and left to her own reflections.] I said No, decidedly, and took her hand down gently. She sat still awhile, and then uttered the most frightful yell that I ever heard. Her face was perfectly pale, and she trembled from head to foot. I said, "You must go and sit alone." One second she clung to my dress, [here was another critical moment, which should have been improved,] and then went quietly out of the room.

At dinner time, I led her to the table, without speaking, and after that, gave her a chair to sit by herself, without work. Instead of looking troubled, as she generally does after having done anything wrong, she assumed an expression of indifference, and talked to herself a little, and then feigned sleep. When she had taken tea, I asked her if she thought she could do as I told her to do this morning, if I let her go to the schoolroom. She said she would. I led her in, and she did it very quietly. After this, I talked an hour with her, trying to get her to feeling as she ought. She acknowledged the wrong at once, and *said* she was sorry, but her countenance indicated anything but sorrow. I left her during the hour for reading, and when I returned, she looked much more troubled, and I told her she might go to bed, hoping that her own thoughts might bring her to a right state of feeling.

Saturday, Feb. 3rd. This morning have talked with Laura again, and am completely discouraged. I have tried every argument, and appealed to every motive that I can think of, and with but partial success. The only thing which seemed to move her at all was, that I did not want to punish her, but that I could not let her do many things to-day to make her happy ; when she went to Exhibition, I could not let Sophia talk with her, and could not let her go to the party, because only good girls went. But these were direct appeals to selfishness, and they were all that touched her. I do not know what to do and never felt the need of counsel more. As I had exhausted every argument, I thought I would try the effect of a lesson in Geography ; so taught her something about the produce of different countries of Europe, and of their manufactures. She was very quiet during this, and also a writing lesson which followed. The regular lesson for the last hour's school would have been the reading of a story, and I thought best to omit it. At dinner, she seemed to be very well satisfied with herself. When it was time to go into the schoolroom for the exhibition, she said, "I think I had better not go." I merely said, "It is time," and took her hand to lead her. During the exhibition she said, "Is Sophia here ?" I told her she was in her desk, in the schoolroom. "I am very happy," was the only reply. This was a spirit of defiance in Laura that I had never seen before. A few moments after, she attempted to kiss me, thinking she could take the advantage of the pres-

ence of company. She was very willing to answer her questions, and willing to do what I wished her to do. At seven, I told her she could go to bed, and she went, without any objection, but still with the same expression of countenance.

Sunday, Feb. 4th. As Laura proposed that she should sit alone to-day, I left her this forenoon in the basement, where she had seated herself. When I returned from church, she did not appear to be troubled at all. I led her to dinner, and then of her own accord, she returned to the same place. At tea-time, she seemed much more sad, and after tea, I sat down by her to try what effect I could produce then. I could now perceive a great difference, and after I had told her how wrong it was that she did not feel more sad for doing wrong, she said, "I do feel very sad now,—I was sad and cried this afternoon, and I thought that I was *very* wrong, and I asked God to forgive me, and send me good thoughts, and to love me." She then asked the old question, "What shall I ask God first, when I ask Him to give me good thoughts? Must I say, Lord, Father, my Heavenly?" I answered her, that she could say just what she thought first, and that satisfied her. I told her that I was glad that she felt better now, and that I would forgive her, and I hoped she would never be angry again. She said, "I think I *never* shall do so again. Why do I feel so very sad after I ask God to forgive me, and when you forgive me?" I told her it was because she felt sorry that she had done wrong at all.

Every reflecting person must see and lament the error of treatment, but the best might have fallen into it. It may be good, it may be necessary, "to break the will of a child," but never unless we have vainly tried to make it break its own will.

How many softening hearts do we harden by our own sternness; how often are rising sobs suppressed by harsh reproofs; how many, by their Gorgon aspect, turn the just forming tear of contrition into stony hardness, and leave it the nucleus of selfishness and rage! And if these things are done even by parents, who would "coin their hearts, and drop their blood for drachmas," to promote the real good of those whom they punish, how much oftener are they done by teachers, who, when roused by opposition, forget that there may be great selfishness in their determination to carry their point. Even those who strive to govern their tempers, sometimes fail because their fathers "ate the sour grapes, and set their teeth on edge." Laura has not escaped all such untoward influences; there are persons who have had much influence over her education, who have labored most diligently, and displayed great tact and ingenuity in developing her intellect, but who have never succeeded in inspiring that perfect love which casteth out fear; there are others, with far less intellect and acquirement, who have gained more complete dominion over her affections, and whose will and pleasure is her delightful law.

We sometimes attribute the misconduct of children to perverseness and ill-temper, when it is really occasioned by causes over which they have no control, such as indigestion, derangement of some of the bodily functions augmented by particular state of the atmosphere, and other things. In such conditions they feel unpleasantly, and having but imperfect development of the moral character, and little self-control, they are unamiable and cross. With adults we follow Shakspeare's advice, that such "little faults proceeding from distemper should be winked at," but children are noticed instead of being left unob-

served, and perhaps punished instead of being pitied or reasoned with, and they become sullen and sour.

The only other instance of ill temper which I have to notice is contained in the following extract, and it will be seen that it was kindly and judiciously treated.

Tuesday, Jan. 16th.—Laura continued to do well in Arithmetic this morning. Yesterday she went to see Miss J. in Boston, and while I was away, commenced fault-finding: Eunice was wrong because she had gone into the kitchen; Frank was wrong because he came over J.'s stairs to find Rogers. To each of these charges, which were evidently made, that she might blame them, Miss J. said she was very glad they came. She then said I was not right since I put my dress on the bed. These were only a few of the cases. About three months ago, she did the same thing, and I talked with her a long time about it until I thought she saw the wrong, and felt sorry for it. When I called for her to take her home, she wanted to talk with me, but I told her I could not talk; that J. said she had been unkind and wanted her to think about it. She said no more, and soon after we got home it was time for her to go to bed. This morning at nine I told her I wanted to talk about it. She looked very sad, when I asked her to tell me what she told J. In all the charges against Eunice and Frank, I showed her where they were both right in doing what they did; in reply to those she brought against myself,—I told her of some careless things which she did yesterday when preparing to walk;—such as pulling a dress down and leaving it on the floor,—a closet door open, &c., and asked her if she would like to have me go to J. and tell of them, that she might blame her; and when I said that I shut the door and hung up the dress, she answered, “you were very kind, I was very unkind.” I talked with her some time to convince her, how often she might tell her wrong stories, by blaming people for things she did not know about. She said, “whose people did I blame?” I did not understand what she meant, and answered, you blamed *many* people. “I blamed the Lord’s people,” said she. I was surprised to hear this, and asked, what does Lord’s mean? “God’s, —I saw it in a book;” and she showed me, in “the Child’s Second Book,” the Commandments, “I am the Lord thy God,” &c. She said, “how can I ask God to forgive me for blaming his people?” You can ask him in your thoughts. “Can I know when he forgives me,—how can I know?” He will give you good thoughts. The next hour was for writing,—she came to me and said, “I have asked God to forgive me and I hope I shall not be unkind.” She then seated herself to write, but it was a long time before she could do so. I took a seat a short distance from her and tried to read her conversation with herself, her soliloquy. She said to herself, “I am very sorry.” “Dr. said he preferred to teach me himself.” “Why can I not know? It makes me very nervous.” There was much more that I could not read.

Jan. 17th.—At nine gave her a lesson in Philosophy on the Lever. She seemed to understand the three kinds,—so that she could tell me what kind I used when taking coals with tongs, and ashes with the shovel, shutting a door, &c., and in more lessons will do very well. After the lesson, she said, “I think God has sent me good thoughts, I am very happy to-day, I do not feel cross any.” I asked why she kissed me so much; she said “because I love you so much; you are very kind to teach me many new things.”

The soliloquy mentioned above is only a specimen of what occurs every day, though it is rarely that one can make out what she says, because her fingers move with such rapidity as to run the signs into each other, as we unite words with each other, and speak by whole sentences rather than by single words.

[Concluded in our next.]